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Identical letters dated 16 July 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I write to inform you that on Tuesday, 14 July 2009, a series of explosions ripped through a weapons cache in Khirbat Salim, a Shiite village located north-east of Tibnin, Lebanon. The explosions, which lasted from early morning until approximately 1500 hours, took place under an abandoned civilian house on the outskirts of the village.

The house in question was, in fact, an arms cache that consisted of Hizbullah arms, including rockets, mortars, artillery shells, grenades, and additional ammunition which had been brought to the area following the Second Lebanon War. The smuggling and presence of such weapons stands in direct contravention of United Nations Security Council resolution 1701, which explicitly distinguishes the area between the Blue Line and the Litani river as "[an] area free of any armed personnel, assets, and weapons, other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL".

This incident in Khirbat Salim verifies Israel's repeated claims since the adoption of resolution 1701 that Hizbullah continues to build its military infrastructure throughout Lebanon, including south of the Litani river. As Israel mentioned in multiple previous letters and statements to the Secretary-General and the Security Council, including in my most recent letter dated 15 June 2009, Hizbullah adapted its modus operandi by placing most of its arsenal in civilian villages and using houses as bunkers and arms depots. Such actions on the part of Hizbullah are clear violations of resolution 1701 which gravely endanger the stability in the region. Furthermore, it is extremely alarming that Hizbullah intentionally places its weapons in close proximity to civilians and thus endangers the local Lebanese civilian population.

In addition to the aforementioned arms smuggling, a secondary and equally severe violation of resolution 1701 took place during the incident. In the aftermath of the Khirbat Salim explosions, a United Nations spokesperson confirmed that civilians attempted to hamper the investigation of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Other credible reports noted that the Lebanese Armed Forces delayed the deployment of UNIFIL to conduct an investigation into the circumstances of the incident. Both Israel and reports in the Lebanese press suggest that this delay was used by Hizbullah operatives to remove evidence of their illicit activity before UNIFIL was permitted to inspect the area. This is a severe violation

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of resolution 1701, as paragraph 12 "authorizes UNIFIL to take all necessary action in areas of deployment of its forces and as it deems within its capabilities, to ensure that its area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities of any kind, to resist attempts by forceful means to prevent it from discharging its duties under the mandate of the Security Council, and to protect United Nations personnel, facilities, installations and equipment, ensure the security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel, humanitarian workers and, without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon, to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence".

The obstruction following the explosion of 14 July reflects one of the most severe obstructions of movement against UNIFIL since the adoption of resolution 1701. Unfortunately, such obstruction is not an isolated incident and reflects a pattern in which Hizbullah uses various means, including so-called "civilians", in order to prevent UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces from fulfilling their mandate. Other incidents of obstruction on 31 March 2008 and on 16 January 2009 are two additional examples of such non-compliance with resolution 1701. However, the most recent obstruction was all the more severe, as UNIFIL was unable to immediately implement its obligations. As such, that obstruction of movement must be denounced.

The 14 July explosion is a reflection of the larger efforts by Hizbullah to rearm itself in direct contravention of resolution 1701 and other relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. In this regard, Syrian and Iranian efforts to supply Hizbullah's arsenal are endangering the stability of the region and must be confronted by concrete actions on both the Lebanese and Syrian border, as well as by the international community. Despite the fact that almost one year has passed since the publication of the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team II report, no action has yet been taken to address the porous eastern border of Lebanon.

Furthermore, Hizbullah openly admits its efforts to grow and bolster its arsenal. As I wrote in the aforementioned letter to the Secretary-General regarding the implementation of resolution 1701, as recently as 13 May 2009, Sheikh Naim Qassem, the Deputy Secretary-General of Hizbullah, stated in an interview to the *Financial Times*:

> "We do not talk about details of our arsenal. This is our strength. Not talking, this is our strength against our enemy. But what I will say here is that we will not deny but we will not confirm that we have three or four times the arsenal that we had in 2006 as they [Israelis] say."

In addition, it is worthy to note that one of the closest individuals to Hizbullah Secretary-General Nasrallah, Mr. Ibrahim al-Amin, wrote in *Al Akhbar* newspaper on 13 July 2009 that: "The resistance [Hizbullah] has become a fully fledged army [*sic*]. Its knowledge of the security, military, and logistic fields has expanded; so did its equipment, which grew several fold in terms of quality and quantity, and the weaponry it was not allowed to keep in the past, now it is keeping abundantly [*sic*]".

The explosion in Khirbat Salim coupled with Hizbullah's stated intentions to maintain and build its terrorist arsenal should be a grave cause for concern. The fact that Hizbullah seeks to reconstitute itself south of the Litani river while embedding itself into the civilian population only heightens this concern.

As Israel has mentioned several times, UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces must adapt their modus operandi south of the Litani river to confront this new reality. The Lebanese government must do more to prevent the rearmament of Hizbullah by taking concrete steps against Hizbullah's efforts to create a military infrastructure in Lebanese villages south of the Litani river. Ongoing Syrian and Iranian efforts to support and arm Hizbullah must also be addressed in concrete terms. All of these flagrant violations of resolution 1701, including arms smuggling and the obstruction of movement of UNIFIL forces, merit the appropriate attention of and response by the Secretary-General and the Security Council.

Finally, I wish to take this opportunity to request a copy of the findings of the investigation conducted by UNIFIL into the 14 July 2009 explosion.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gabriela **Shalev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative